Nixon Mortgage Still $300,000

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KEY BISCAYNE, May 26 — President Nixon and his wife still owe $300,000 on the purchase of their Western White House retreat overlooking the Pacific Ocean at San Clemente, Calif., the Florida White House said today.

The Nixons are paying off the mortgage on the property at a 7½ per cent interest rate, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said.

But he said he could offer no explanation why two former key Nixon aides, domestic affairs adviser John D. Ehrlichman and White House counsel John W. Dean III, separately told reporters in the last year that a 20-acre tract surrounding the Nixons' San Clemente complex was not sold, when in fact the President and his wife disposed of it in December, 1970.

Ehrlichman resigned and Dean was fired last month in the wake of disclosures linking them to the Watergate scandal.

The Nixons purchased the San Clemente property in 1969 with the help of $625,000 in loans from millionaire industrialist Robert Abplanalp, the White House revealed Friday.

Later, the Nixons sold the 20 acres to a holding company created by Abplanalp for $1,249,000. At the time, that left the Nixons with a $340,000 mortgage, a figure the White House says has been reduced to $300,000.

The Nixons apparently put down relatively little money on the total $1.5 million purchase of the 29 acres in San Clemente. Warren said most of the $625,000 in Abplanalp loans was used as down payments which toaled $420,000 for purcahsing two tracts and paying for $123,514 in improvements the Nixons have made on the property.

Some money for the San Clemente transactions also came from the Nixons' $326,000 sale of their Fifth Avenue apartment in New York in 1969, but Warren said he did not know how much.

Warren said Abplanalp money not used directly for the down payments or the improvements was used for other expenses, such as closing costs, associated with the San Clemente purchases.

The deputy press secretary also said he had no explanation of why the public had not been informed of the San Clemente purchase arrangements with Ablanadp until Friday.

The White House statement was issued in response to a story in The Santa Ana (Calif.) Register which claimed that unreported campaign funds were used to buy the house, but the White House has called that version of the transactions "a total fabrication."

The President, accompanied by Mrs. Nixon, Julie and David Eisenhower and Tricia and Edward Cox, flew to Abplanalp's Bahamian retreat on Grand Cay this afternoon.

Abplanalp, who made his money by perfecting the aerosol spray valve, owns Grand Cay, where he has a concrete block house overlooking the Atlantic Ocean 100 miles east of Florida. Abplanalp, 51, has turned a nearby island, Walker Cay, into a deep sea fishing resort. He and the President frequently have gone boating in the industrialist's yacht, the Sea Lion.

There was no immediate information on when Mr. Nixon and his family would return from Grand Cay.

Before departing by helicopter for Grand Cay, the White House said, the President conferred, either by telephone or in person, with foreign affairs adviser Henry A. Kissinger, press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler and White House chief of staff Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr.

The White House also announced that the President would nominate W. Tapley Bennett Jr., a career diplomat, to be the U.S. deputy representative to the United Nations.

Bennett, currently deputy representative to the U.N. Security Council, has previously served as ambassador to the Dominican Republic and Portugal. It was during his Dominican Republic stint that Bennett became a controversial figure.

He was the U.S. official who encouraged President Johnson to send Marines to quell an alleged Communist takeover of the Caribbean island country. Some liberal U.S. politicians criticized Bennett for his role in the intervention, saying he was "looking for Communists under every bed."

Mr. Nixon nominated William E. Schaufele, currently senior adviser to the U.S. representative to the United Nations, to replace Bennett as deputy representative to the Security Council.

Barbara M. White, special assistant to the director of the U.S. Information Agency, was nominated to be alternate representative for special political affairs at the United Nations. Clarence Clyde Ferguson Jr., a deputy assistant secretary for African affairs in the State Department, was nominated to be the U.S. representative on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. All four nominations must be approved by the Senate.